

Digit Murphy Testimony
Head Coach Brown University Women's Hockey Team
Before the Subcommittee on Science, Technology, and Space of the Senate Committee
on Commerce, Science and Transportation in regard to Title IX and Opportunities for
Women in Science, Mathematics, and Engineering
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You might be wondering what a college ice hockey coach has to say about educational opportunities for girls in math and technology. Let me begin by letting you know that a hockey puck travels 60 miles per hour because of the torque applied to the stick which in turn creates a force on the puck and transfers momentum.

Seriously, the world of sport used to look like the world of math and technology – all boys and no girls. Today, 42% of all high school and college athletes are female. And it is interesting to note that there has been an 847% increase in girls participating in high school athletics since 1972. But participating on the field, in the pool, or on the ice is only one part of the story. There are huge benefits associated with athletics that go beyond the X'S AND O'S! Research studies show that girls who play sports enjoy greater physical and emotional health and are less likely to engage in a host of risky behaviors (ie. drug use, smoking, drinking) than non-participants.¹

As a girls' ice hockey player growing up in RI, I was an anomaly. Girls simply didn't play ice hockey. Boys did. The only time that it was acceptable for girls to be on the ice at that time was to be a figure skater. It was difficult to grow up with the stigma that you did not engage in "normal" girls' sports like field hockey or softball. But the opportunity that ice hockey provided me: to be "recruited" by an Ivy League school made it ultimately worthwhile.

As a collegiate athlete at Cornell University from 1979-1983, the team that I played on traveled in vans, stayed four players to a hotel room, had minimum per diem for meals, our equipment was self provided, our ice time was what the men's team didn't want, and our head coach was paid little more than a volunteer. Recruiting budgets were what our coach could pay out of his own pocket, and administrative help was minimal.

Strides have certainly been made in all areas of our sport. Unfortunately, we had to wait until 1995 after *Cohen v. Brown* for Title IX to be enforced at my institution.

Presently, our student athletes at Brown enjoy vastly different conditions than I did in 1979. Today's budgets are adequately funded in regard to team transportation, lodging, per diem, equipment, scheduling, facilities, ice time, and recruiting. We have three full time coaches—myself and two assistants. These conditions of equitable treatment for women's hockey players can be seen throughout all NCAA programs in the country.

¹ Title IX at 30: Report Card on Gender Equity, Women's Sports Foundation June 2002

The number of institutions sponsoring women's hockey has grown from 9 collegiate teams in 1981 to 71 teams today. Collegiate participation in women's hockey has grown 392%² Grass roots development of girls playing hockey in both the US and Canada has also grown as a result of Title IX and its trickle down effect. In the US, the number of girls playing hockey has grown from 6,336 in 1990 to 39,693 in 2001³. The Olympic movement for women's hockey was equally a beneficiary of Title IX. With so many women playing our sport, the pool of Olympians has grown substantially. I'm sure that you all remember the first ever gold medal won in women's hockey in 1998 by the United States.

There might be lessons to be learned from our experiences in fighting for gender equality in a previously all-male sport environment:

1. Because the media is interested in sport, they produced "report cards" comparing men's and women's sports benefits and numbers. When these report cards made the educational institution look bad, change happened. Public embarrassment has a way of persuading schools they had better get their acts together. Congress added the Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act in the late '90s to make sure the report cards were issued in a public way and now critical participation and expenditure data on college athletics is available on the web and used by the press to remind schools of their obligations to comply. So, my first recommendation is to require regular reporting of critical indicators on the status of girls and women in math and technology.
2. The second reason why sport has advanced more so than other Title IX areas is because there were many lawsuits brought by parents. I lived through one at Brown. Let me tell you it was not pretty. To be employed at an institution that is so completely committed to the equitable treatment of our students on all fronts, and have the ultimate test of equity in athletics challenged and interpreted pitted the male population against the female population. To this day there are lasting implications of the lawsuit. Lawsuits are not good. They put parents, kids and educational institutions at each other's throats rather than looking for solutions. The Office of Civil Rights must do a better job enforcing the law. These types of situations should not continue to exist.
3. The third and most important reason why Title IX was a success (there is more to be done however) is because the newspapers, always preoccupied with controversy in sports, served as an effective mechanism for educating the American public. When parents understood their daughter's rights, they used the mechanisms of civic engagement – from holding school boards accountable to bring lawsuits – to make the educational institution responsive. We must require our schools to educate students and their parents about Title IX. Unfortunately, math and technology aren't sexy enough to get free press. But as the parent of a 7 year old girl, I firmly believe that if parents were more informed of the opportunities or lack thereof for their daughters in math and science, they would be as vocal and engaged as they are in their quest for equality in athletics.

² NCAA Year-By-Year Sports Participation 1982-2001

³ USA Hockey Website 2002

4. In athletics we learned that it is really the intangibles that count. At Brown, our philosophy statement calls for the development of the total person. We focus on the process of being a team, and not the end result. Our athletes learn the values of teamwork, cooperative learning, discipline, personal responsibility, and commitment. These are the life lessons that we teach through athletics that help our athletes when they continue on to their careers. Teachers encourage girls to play, showing up for their games and celebrating their victories. Teachers and administrators must inspire, encourage and motivate young girls in the same way that they inspire, encourage and motivate young boys. We cannot allow educators to succumb to stereotypical beliefs about boys being more interested in math and science than girls. Stereotyping has a way of becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy. We cannot allow this to happen to our children.

On a final note, I would like to convey the immediacy of this topic with the recent appointment of the Commission on Title IX by the Bush administration. If Title IX is weakened, it will not only have a profound impact on athletics but will send a clear message that maintaining and progressing opportunities for our daughters in all program areas is not a priority.

I would like to close by conveying the message that, girls hit hockey pucks, girls are great mathematicians, girls check and girls love technology. If you create environments that send such messages to girls, they will come.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I welcome any questions.
